

Fort Carson continues close monitoring of West Nile Virus

Thus far this year, two different pooled samples of mosquitoes collected from light traps on Fort Carson have tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). The infected mosquitoes were collected from the light trap located at Butts Army Airfield and resulted in the entire area being treated (fogged) on 22 Sept 04.

This serves as a reminder that even though the mosquito season is drawing to a close, no one should let down their guard just yet about mosquito bite prevention. Even after a first freeze, which usually brings a close to the mosquito season, it is still possible to have a few lingering mosquitoes looking for a meal. Since this has been an atypical season for WNV, the Directorate of Environmental Compliance and Management (DECAM) would like to pass on some reminders regarding WNV, symptoms and mosquito bite prevention.

Birds, such as crows, ravens, magpies and jays, can carry WNV. The virus has the potential to spread to humans and some animals through bites from mosquitoes that have fed on the blood of infected birds. It is important to know that the chances of contracting WNV are extremely small, due to the fact that very few mosquitoes actually become infected. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, less than 1 percent of people infected with West Nile virus will develop severe illness.

People who become infected with West Nile Virus may show mild symptoms, no symptoms at all, or in the case of some individuals, especially the elderly and people with compromised immune systems, may show very serious and life threatening symptoms. Symptoms usually occur within five to 15 days and may appear as:

- **Mild:** fever, headache, rash, swollen glands and pink eye, or
- **Severe:** severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, disorientation, paralysis, coma and death if (not treated).

The presence of WNV should **NOT** cause people to cancel outdoor activities. Using sensible precautions against mosquitoes is suggested.

- Wear white or light colored long sleeve shirts, long pants and socks when outdoors, especially in the early mornings and evenings in areas where mosquitoes are most active. Dark colors tend to attract mosquitoes.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET when outdoors. Be careful applying repellent to children under 12 years old. For young children, only apply repellent that contains 10 percent or less DEET. Avoid spraying or applying DEET to their hands and mouth area.
- Make sure screens on doors and windows are tight fitting, and repair any holes or tears.
- Avoid standing water in stagnant puddles, wetlands and ditches. Standing water provides an ideal breeding sites for mosquitoes.
- Change the water in birdbaths, pools and other containers of standing water at least every two-to-four days.
- Locations of standing pools of water on Fort Carson should be reported to the Installation WNV Action Officer at 526-1686.
- Keep scavenger birds such as crows, jays, ravens and magpies that can carry WNV out of populated areas by putting away dog food and cleaning up garbage.
- Please report dead crows, jays, ravens, magpies and other birds to the Installation WNV Action Officer (526-1686), Monday through Friday between the hours of 0730 and 1530; or the Military Police (526-2333) during non-duty hours, weekends and holidays.

For more information, call the Installation WNV Action Officer at 526-1686.